

Exploring Attention

PURPOSE

In this learning experience, students will be introduced to the concept of attention by using the visual metaphor of a flashlight. After discussing attention and its benefits, students play a game called “I notice, I wonder.” During this, they pass around a novel object while sharing what they notice about it, and then things they wonder about it. This activity highlights how paying close attention reveals details that could make even a simple object interesting, and also that each of us may experience the same object in different ways. The learning experience concludes with a reflective practice for using a resource to strengthen attention.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore the skill of “attention” by studying related vocabulary and the benefits that come from developing attention
- Explore the strengthening of attention as a skill
- Learn that people often perceive things differently, even when looking at the same object or situation

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



**Relationship
Skills**



**Attention &
Self-Awareness**

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Several small objects of curiosity, preferably ones that students are unlikely to have encountered or paid close attention to before. (Examples: seedpod, tool, seashell, interesting textile, wooden mask, honeycomb, bone, piece of unusual fruit, photograph, art, etc.)
- A bag (Optional: if you want to do a version where students don't see the object)

LENGTH

45 minutes

CHECK-IN | 10 minutes

[PAUSE]s can be up to 5-7 seconds each
Standardized Resourcing, Grounding
& Tracking Practice

Note: Resourcing, Grounding, Tracking and Shift and Stay were introduced in Chapter 2. If you have not already introduced these skills, please do so first. Otherwise, this settling practice will not be familiar to students.

- *"Let's take a moment to get comfortable in an alert position. What does your body need right now?" [PAUSE]*
- *For you, it may be settling into your chair, leaning against a wall, or sitting or lying on the floor. Please take a moment to make yourself comfortable. Feel free to move if you need to. [PAUSE]*
- *Now I invite you to think of a resource, something that makes you feel better, safer, happier, or stronger. A person, a place, a thing, something about yourself, or a memory. It can be real or imaginary. Notice the details of this resource and any sensations that come with it. [PAUSE]*
- *When you think about this resource, what do you notice happening inside your body? [LONGER PAUSE]*
- *Next, if you like, I invite you to ground. Bring your attention to your body and what it is in contact with. Perhaps you feel the chair against your back, your hand on*

your leg. Possibly you feel the coolness of the table, the softness of your shirt, maybe the air going in and out of your nostrils. What sensations do you notice on the inside? [PAUSE]

- *If you notice a pleasant or neutral sensation, just pay attention to that and observe it. See if it changes or stays the same. [PAUSE]*
- *If you become aware of an unpleasant sensation, you can always shift your attention to another place that feels better and let your attention rest there. Or you can also re-focus on your resource. [PAUSE]*
- *If you get distracted, remember that you are human and it's okay to get distracted. Just acknowledge you're distracted and try to bring your attention back to your resource or a pleasant or neutral sensation in your body. [LONGER PAUSE]*
- *As we do this, we're learning more about our bodies and how to calm them and make them feel better.*
- *Now we'll conclude the practice. If you closed your eyes, I invite you to open them. Thank you for settling in with me."*

PRESENTATION | 10 minutes

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- The teacher or a student volunteer can verbally read the paragraphs below.
- The teacher or a student volunteer can create a word map with “benefits of attention training” in the middle.

“Benefits of attention training include enhanced concentration, learning, and retention of information, as well as strengthening one’s ability to control our impulses by calming our body and mind.

Attention training also supports the cultivation of compassion for self and others, body literacy (gaining awareness of and language for describing bodily sensations) and emotional awareness (recognizing and understanding emotions in self and others).

The skill of attention is cultivated not through force of will, but rather by repeatedly and gently cultivating opportunities for practice, and by learning to notice what happens to the mind and body when one is able to pay attention with calmness and clarity. Another benefit of attention cultivation is ethical awareness—awareness of what contributes to our and others’ flourishing.

Can anyone help explain one of the benefits listed?”

Reflective Question: ***“Consider and write down 3 benefits you might want to cultivate.”***

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 15 minutes

I notice, I wonder

Guided Language

“Today we will continue to practice the concept of non-judgmental attention as a skill.

We will be keeping our attention on our chosen object in order to strengthen our attention.

We will study the object carefully as if encountering it for the first time and then say something we notice or wonder about it.

Each of us will have a chance to describe the object. The challenge is to not repeat anything someone else has already said.”

- Form one circle as a whole group or break up into smaller groups with a few circles.
- Pass around one object at a time, giving each student a chance to hold and observe the object and then describe it by noticing and wondering about it without naming it. (I notice_____,I wonder_____).

Repeat this process with a few different interesting and varying objects (something from nature, something human made, photos, artwork, etc....)

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 10 minutes

In the circle or in pairs, ask students to debrief choosing from the following questions:

- Who heard someone else say something that you were thinking too?
- What did someone say that you hadn't yet noticed or wondered about?
- Who can add one more thing they notice?
Or wonder?
How long do you think we could keep finding new observations or wonderings, and why?
- We didn't have any wrong answers.
Why do you think that is? [We're describing our own experiences, not opinions or judgments.]
- Who got distracted at some point?
Who lost attention for a moment?
How were you able to bring your attention back to the group and the object?
- What sensations did you notice feeling during this activity?
Where did you feel sensations in your body?

Guided Language

"When we pay close attention to something, we keep noticing new things about it."

Everyone has their own perspective.

We notice different things about the same object.

When we look closely and carefully, observe before making a judgment.

It's easier to see that there are no "right" answers, just different experiences."